NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07954554 1

The Woodcutter's Son

AND OTHER OLD ENGLISH TALES RETOLD

by

Violet Moore Higgins

Story-Time Tales

ZB
Hiooi

THREE TIMES MUST YOU GO ROUND

THE WOODCUTTER'S SON

And Other English Tales Retold

STORIES AND PICTURES BY
VIOLET MOORE HIGGINS
AUTHOR OF THE LITTLE JUGGLER, THE SILVER SHIP, ETC.

WHITMAN PUBLISHING CO.
RACINE CHICAGO.

CC 1917
UL

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
297038B
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1944 L

COPYRIGHT, 1917, BY
WHITMAN PUBLISHING COMPANY

44X505

CONTENTS

	Page
The Woodcutter's Son	15
Childe Rowland	39
The Grateful Fish	57

ILLUSTRATIONS

"Three Times Must You Go Round" . . . . . (*Color frontispiece*)

Page

Decorative Title Page 3

He Starts for the Wonder World . 13

She Falls in Love with Werdon (*color*) 19

The Eagle Carries Werdon on His Back 23

Burd Ellen Was Playing Ball (*color*) 37

He Consults Merlin, the Magician 41

A Neat Little Maid Was Sweeping (*color*) 56

The Little Old Lady Lived in a Syrup Pitcher 59

"Good Evening," Said the Fish . . 63

INTRODUCTION

ONG YEARS AGO in "Merrie Olde Englande," story telling was as common and as important as are books and newspapers nowadays.

The rich people of that time lived in mighty stone castles, sometimes many miles away from any other dwelling. They had no means of going from place to place, except on horseback, and it was a real event when a wandering minstrel entered the castle gates and asked for a night's lodging.

When the traveler had rested and had enjoyed a good supper, the lord of the castle would summon his wife and children and all the servants of the household. Often he would have the steward strike the great gong which hung by the door, calling in the shepherds from the fields and the charcoal burners from their huts in the forest.

Then all would group themselves around the minstrel, who was given the place of honor in the chimney-corner nook of the huge fire-place, at one end of the great hall.

With the shaggy boarhounds stretched out at his feet, and with a circle of eager faces all around him, the wanderer would begin to touch the strings of his harp, and then, in a full round voice, half in song and half in story, he would recite legends of great kings, of cruel dragons overcome by powerful knights, of beautiful maidens in distress, of ogres, elves and giants.

Let us pretend that we, too, are stretched out comfortably on a shaggy fur rug, while the minstrel is telling these stories of Olde Englande.

V. M. H.

The Woodcutter's Son

ONCE upon a time, long long ago, there lived in a deep dark forest a woodcutter, his wife and their son Werdon. He was a bright boy, and though he had never traveled beyond his deep dark forest, he had read many books. He knew that beyond the wood there was a wonder world which he longed to see, where there were palaces and princesses, kings and knights. He longed to leave his home and see that

world, and at last his parents consented to let him go. He bade them farewell, tenderly, and started on his way. As he reached the turn of the road, his father hurried after him, and slipped into his pocket a golden snuff box.

"Do not open it until you are near death," he said, and returned home.

At nightfall, after a long hard day's journey, in which Werdon grew very tired and hungry, he reached a castle, and knocking at the back gate, he was admitted by a maid servant, who seated him by the fire and gave him some food.

Her master's daughter came out into the kitchen as Werdon was eating, and straightway fell in love with the tall, handsome young man, while he, who had

seen lovely ladies only in books, as straightway fell in love with her. Then came the master himself, and began questioning Werdon as to what he could do to pay for his bread and cheese and soup.

"I can do anything," said Werdon simply, not boastingly, thinking the gentleman meant little handy tasks about a house. The boy had always done these things for his mother, so he felt confident he could please the master of the castle.

"Oho, fine," said the gentleman. "Well, by eight o'clock tomorrow I must have a great lake with many men-of-war sailing on it before my castle. The largest ship must fire a grand salute. But if you fail in this your life shall

be forfeited," and so saying, he left the room.

Werdon crept away to the tiny room where the servant had told him he was to sleep, said his prayers and soon fell into a deep slumber. In the morning about half past seven, when he believed he had only another half hour to live, he suddenly recalled the golden snuff box.

"Surely I'll never be nearer death than I am now," he said as he opened it. Out popped three funny little men who asked in chorus: "Master, what is your will?"

Werdon was so miserable that he had to tell his troubles to someone, even if they could not help him, so he related all that had happened.

"All shall be done," said the little men, and at eight o'clock, when Werdon looked out of the window, the ships were floating on a lake before the castle, and even as he gazed, the foremost started to fire a salute which brought everyone running to the windows.

The master was amazed, and pleased, of course, but he was not satisfied, and devised a new task for Werdon. On the second day he was to fell all the trees for miles around, and this Werdon did, with the help of the little men in the snuff box. By this time the young man had declared his love for the gentleman's daughter, and she had vowed she would wed none but Werdon. So her father agreed to consent to the wedding, after the suitor should have done

one more task. This was the building, in one night, of a great palace which should stand up out of the water on twelve golden pillars. Werdon and his helpers accomplished it with ease, so that the rising sun shone on the glittering golden walls of the magic palace.

So the woodcutter's son married the gentleman's daughter, and there was much feasting and rejoicing, and for a time they were very happy.

Now, Werdon had a servant whose duty it was to take care of his master's many beautiful suits, and one day the servant accidentally discovered the golden snuff box. Werdon usually carried it everywhere with him, but in changing his clothes hastily, he had forgotten it.

The servant, quite over-mastered by

SHE FALLS IN LOVE WITH WERDON

his curiosity, opened the box and out popped the three little men.

"Master, what is your will?" they cried as one person.

Now it happened that Werdon and all the other men guests were out hunting, so the tricky servant, who saw at once the secret of his master's power, said to them:

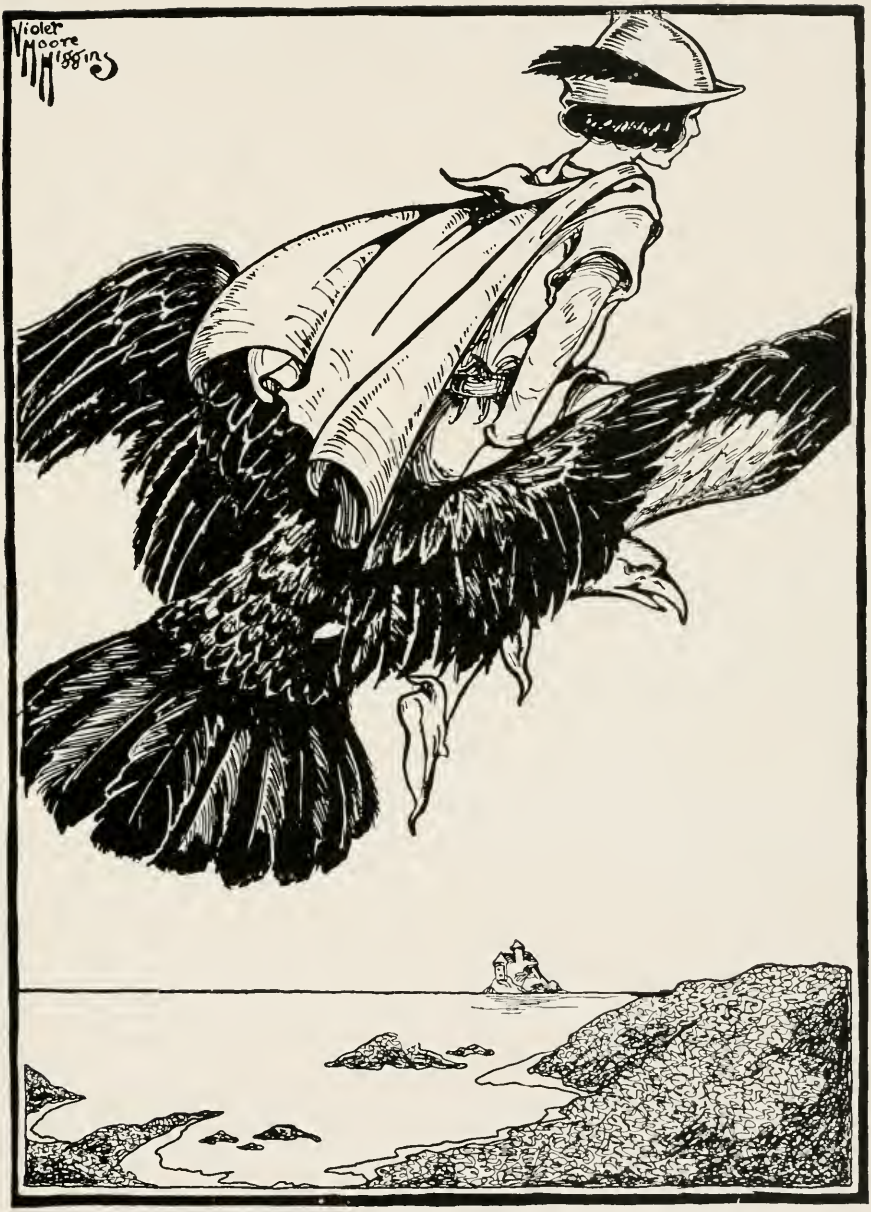
"Take this palace, and me with it, far over the sea."

At once it was done, so that when the hunting party returned there was no palace, and worst of all there was no lovely bride. Everyone was very angry with poor Werdon, but after some little talk among themselves, it was decided to allow him a year in which to find the lost palace.

So he set out on horseback, with a purse of gold in his pocket, and when he had journeyed for days and weeks, over hill and dale he came to the palace of the King of all the Mice. Here Werdon entered after some little parley with the mouse sentries scattered through the palace. Presently he was brought before the king, to whom he told all of his misfortunes.

The Mouse King invited him to stay over night with him, and on the following morning he called all the mice together, and asked them if they had ever seen the palace on twelve golden pillars. But none of them had seen it, so poor Werdon got no help there. However, the king had another idea.

"I have two brothers," he said. "One



THE EAGLE CARRIED WERDON ON HIS BACK

is King of all the Frogs and the other is King of all the Birds in the world. Leave your horse here and take one of my best steeds. Go to my Frog brother, and give him this cake. Then he will know where you came from. Tell him I am well, and would love to see him."

Werdon and the king shook hands and parted, but as he left the palace of the mice, the little mouse sentinel ran up his horse's leg and jumped into Werdon's pocket.

"I'd like to travel," he squeaked, "and I may be of great help to you sometime."

It was a long journey to the palace of the Frog King, but at last, just at nightfall, Werdon reached it, and had

an audience with the king who received him kindly and entertained him well, because of the cake. The next morning he called together all of the frogs in the world, and questioned them about the palace on the twelve golden pillars, but they knew nothing at all concerning it.

But the king urged Werdon to take a fresh horse, and another piece of cake and go to the third brother, the King of all the Birds. Just as he was setting out a little frog sentry jumped up on his horse and begged to go with him, so Werdon tucked him in his pocket and rode on.

After a long journey he came to the kingdom of all the birds, and here, having delivered his cake and his message,

Werdon was well received and well entertained by the king.

The following day all the birds were summoned and questioned, but none had seen the palace.

But where is the eagle?" asked the Bird King, and sent two swallows high in air to whistle to him. He came at last, quite out of breath from his long flight, and he had news of the palace, indeed, he had just come from it.

"Then, when you have rested and dined, you must take this young gentleman there," said the king. Accordingly, in an hour or so, they were started, the eagle spreading his broad wings, and carrying Werdon on his back. After a long journey over far seas they came in sight of it at last, but were at a loss

to know just how to get the little golden snuff box, after all, for Werdon was quite sure that the rascally servant would guard it well.

"Put me down on the palace steps, and I will get it," squeaked the little mouse, who was tucked away in Werdon's right pocket. "No one will ever notice a little mouse."

And truly enough, he got into the palace quite unnoticed, and found the box under the pillow of the dishonest servant. He pulled it out so gently that the man never woke, and skipped away down the stairs with it. The eagle caught him up on his broad back and away they went over the sea.

But as they were flying over the ocean, they all fell to quarreling about

which one had really recovered the box, and suddenly it slipped from their hands and fell down to the bottom of the sea.

"Now," said the frog, "I will have a chance to show how clever I am," and he dived into the water. He was down for three days and three nights, then came to the top, and all this time the eagle and his passengers rested on the roof of the palace. But the frog did not have the box. He had merely come up for a breathing spell. So he went down again, and this time he found it.

Then away they all went to the kingdom of the birds, where the king received them with joy and made a great feast for them. But first Werdon opened the marvelous snuff box, released

the little men, and directed them to return and bring the palace at once.

They set off without delay, and when they had reached the palace, craftily waited until the wicked man-servant, and all his followers had gone out in small boats for a ride. Then they seized the palace and went off at full speed with it, while the people in the boats screamed and yelled: "Stop thief." It was of no avail. They were left stranded in the middle of the great sea, and are there yet, no doubt.

The little men came at last to the kingdom of the birds, and here there was a joyful meeting between Werdon and his bride, who all this time had been a prisoner in her own palace. After a little visit with the King of all

the Birds, Werdon, his bride and their palace flew away to the home of the Frog King.

Then, after they had been in the frog kingdom for some days, Werdon ordered the little men to move them back to the land of the King of all the Mice, and away they went—Werdon, bride and palace. The good little mouse sentry jumped from Werdon's pocket at the gate, and picking up his little gun, began to march up and down as if he'd never been away.

And so at last, stabling his own horse, which all this time had been in the land of the mice, in one of the smaller rooms of the golden palace, Werdon bade farewell to the last of his three kind friends and ordered the little

men to bear the palace back to the place in which it had first stood.

So on the day which ended the year of search, the gentleman looked from the windows of his castle and saw the golden palace on its twelve shining golden pillars standing where it had been, and Werdon and his lovely bride were at the door to welcome him. So he forgave Werdon everything, and greeted him with every mark of affection, which Werdon returned.

And that very day the young man sent the three little men to fetch his old father and mother from the deep dark forest, and gave them fine rooms in the golden palace, and there they all lived happily ever after.

Childe Rowland

Childe Rowland

ONCE upon a time long ago, a little girl called Burd Ellen, or Lady Ellen, the daughter of a queen, was playing ball with her three brothers. After a good deal of lively fun, Childe Rowland, the youngest of the brothers, gave the ball such a powerful kick that it sailed high up over the nearby church and fell on the other side.

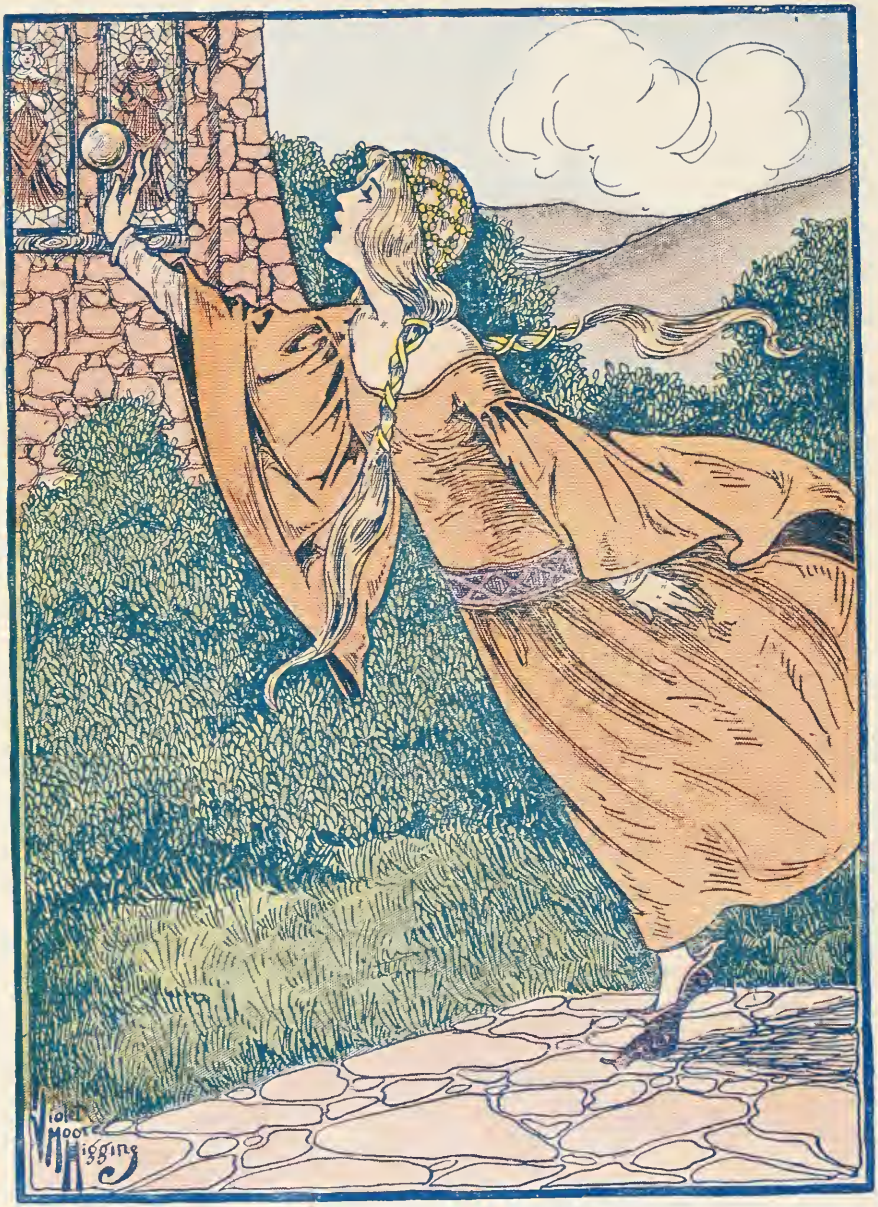
Instantly, lightfooted as a deer, Burd Ellen darted around the church to get the ball. But she did not come back!

Her three brothers waited and waited, then they began calling to her, repeating

her name over and over again, but she did not answer. When at last they ran around to the other side of the church, she was nowhere to be seen. Finally, discouraged and frightened, they huddled together and talked over what should be done. After much discussion, which did not seem to help matters any, the eldest brother bethought him of Merlin, the great magician. He went to him straightway, and told him all that had happened.

"She has been carried away by the pixies, without a doubt," said Merlin, when the brother had finished.

"But why?" the boy asked. "She is the fairest and gentlest of all maids that ever lived, and never did harm or evil to any living creature. The pixies carry away only the wicked, I have been told."



BURD ELLEN WAS PLAYING BALL

"Which way did she go around the church?" asked Merlin suddenly.

"Why, toward the east end, where the ball fell," the boy replied, in some surprise at the question.

"Ah, that explains it," said Merlin, the sage. "She went around the church 'wedershins,' the opposite way to the sun, and by virtue of the Elfin law, she is now a prisoner in the Dark Tower of the King of Elfland. Only the boldest knight in all Christendom may bring her back, and then only if he knows and follows the rules that he must be taught."

So the eldest brother, who loved his sister well, and feared no danger, begged Merlin to tell him how and where to search, and when he had learned what the

sage could tell him, he set out for Elfland.

A long time passed and he did not return. His brothers grieved doubly now, for the loss of Burd Ellen, and for their elder brother. Soon the second sought advice of Merlin and set out to find the two missing ones.

And he, too, never came back. So now, of the three brave sons and one fair daughter, there was left to the widowed queen only one son, Childe Rowland, and when he in turn wished to go and seek his brothers and Burd Ellen, she could not bear to part with him. But he pleaded so earnestly that at last she consented, and gave him his father's sword, a magic blade with a fairy spell upon it.

After Childe Rowland had said good-

HE CONSULTS MERLIN, THE MAGICIAN

by to his mother, he went to ask Merlin just how he should conduct himself on this quest.

"There are but two things to remember," said the wizard. "After you enter Elfland, you must draw your sword and cut off the heads of everybody you meet and speak with, until you come within sight of your sister Burd Ellen. And you must never touch a bite of food or drink in Elfland, or you will never return."

So Childe Rowland thanked Merlin, and set out on his journey. Long he traveled and at last he entered Elfland. Here he met a horse-herd, feeding his pixie horses, whose eyes glowed like balls of fire.

"Where shall I find the King's Dark Tower?" asked Childe Rowland.

"I cannot tell," the man answered him. "Go on a little further, and ask the cow-herd." At that Childe Rowland drew his sword and with one blow struck off the head of the horse-herd.

A little further on he met the cow-herd, who directed him to the hen-wife, so the cow-herd lost his head too, and Childe Rowland went on until he found an old woman, and repeated the question to her.

"A little further on," she answered, "is a round, green hill, with three terraces, and the tower is at the very top. Three times must you go round it—and 'weder-shins' too, mind you—and each time say: 'Open, door, open, and let me come in,' and the third time it will open."

Childe Rowland was so grateful to the old woman that he almost forgot his instructions. Just in time he remembered them, and cut off her head with his sword.

At last he came to the Dark Tower, and walked around it three times, repeating the charm as he had been told to do, and the third time as he stood before the great door with its massive iron hinges, it did open, and he stepped inside. Behind him the great door closed again with a sharp click.

He found himself in a long hallway, made of some stone almost transparent, so that the outside light filtered through like soft twilight, and the walls glittered with quartz and feldspar. Childe Rowland walked on down the dim passage way until

he came to a wide door slightly ajar. Boldly he pushed it open, and found himself in a wonderful place—a hall so vast that it was ten hundred times greater than all the cathedrals of England. The great columns that held the roof were of gold and silver, wreathed around with garlands of flowers, all made of precious jewels—rubies and diamonds, pearls and emeralds. And in the very center there swung by a golden chain one huge pearl for a lamp, and within it was a ruby so large and brilliant that its light shone through the pearl and illuminated the vast hall.

At the very end of the place there was a couch of gold and velvet and there sat Burd Ellen, combing her fair hair with a comb of gold. She cried out in dismay when she saw Childe Rowland.

"Why did you come?" she wailed, "You will never escape alive from this dreadful place of enchantment."

And at that she told him how their two elder brothers had reached the Dark Tower, and were even now lying on couches in another room, as still as if they were dead and under an enchantment from which they would never awaken.

Presently Childe Rowland began to feel very hungry and thirsty after his long journey, and asked his sister to bring him some food, forgetting utterly the warning of Merlin, the sage. Ellen looked at him sadly, but she too, was under an enchantment, and might not warn him of his danger, so she went out of the room and soon returned with a golden bowl full of bread and milk. Childe Rowland raised

it to his lips, then he glanced at his sister, and at the sight of her sad face all his instructions came back to his memory. He dashed the bowl to the ground and so escaped that enchantment. But a new danger was at hand. A loud fierce voice was heard outside, crying:

"Fee, fi, fo, fum, I smell the blood
of a Christian man.
Be he alive or be he dead, I'll grind
his bones to make me bread."

At that the doors opened without hands touching them, and into the vast hall rushed the King of Elfland, with sword in hand.

But Childe Rowland was the boldest knight in Christendom, and dashed at him without fear. They fought and fought, but

the enchanted sword of Childe Rowland overcame the Elfin King at last, and he fell on his knees and pleaded for mercy.

"It shall be granted," Childe Rowland answered sternly, "if you will release my sister Burd Ellen from this enchantment and bring my brothers back to life again."

So the Elfin King agreed, and took from a carved and jeweled chest a little phial filled with a clear red liquid, with which he anointed the ears, eyelids, nostrils and fingertips of the elder brothers. They jumped up in an instant, embraced Burd Ellen, and were overjoyed to see Childe Rowland. Last of all the King of Elfland lifted the spell on Burd Ellen, and she and her brothers went out of the great hall and down the long dim pas-

sage, out of the huge oaken door and away toward their own country, without ever giving one backward glance at the Dark Tower.

But the fair Burd Ellen was very careful after that never to go round a church "wedershins."

The Grateful Fish

The Grateful Fish

ONCE upon a time, long before any of us who read this story were on earth at all, there lived in a far country a queer little mite of an old lady, no bigger than a finger. She made her home in a syrup pitcher which had a broken lid, and had, therefore, been tossed outdoors, nearby the root of a big tree.

Though a syrup pitcher may seem a very odd sort of a home to us, it did very well for the queer little mite of an old lady.

Nearly every day she would take her basket on her arm and go to market. One

day when she was unusually hungry she met a man who was selling live fish at a shilling apiece, or two shillings for the large ones.

Now the queer little mite of an old lady was hungry for fish that day and she selected a fine fellow for a shilling and sixpence. When the fish had been wrapped up in a paper, she tucked him away in her little basket and went on home.

Just before she reached her syrup pitcher house, the queer little mite of an old lady had to cross a small bridge over a creek, and just then the fish poked his head out of the basket, and said in a wee small voice:

"Old lady, old lady, please don't fry

A NEAT LITTLE MAID WAS SWEEPING

me in a pan and eat me for supper. I wouldn't like to be fried and eaten."

"But I paid a whole shilling and sixpence for you," said the queer little mite of a lady, "and if I don't fry you in a pan and eat you, I shall have nothing but bread and butter for my supper."

Big tears began to run down the fish's face.

"Oh, please don't eat me," he said, "and maybe some day I can do you a favor. Throw me back in the creek."

Now, the queer little mite of an old lady had the tenderest heart in the world, so she threw the fish back into the creek, and in another moment, with a flirt of his tail he swam out of sight, calling back, "Thank you, old lady," over his shoulder as he went.

So the queer little mite of an old lady had nothing for supper that night but bread and butter, and the same thing for breakfast. But as she was sweeping the steps the next morning she saw something shining in the dust, and lo—it was a bright new piece of silver money.

So she hung her market basket on her arm once more, and set out for the town, where she bought a nice piece of meat. On her way home, just as she was crossing the bridge, whom should she see but the very fish she had intended to have for supper the night before, swimming about in the creek.

"Good evening, little old lady," he said politely, coming up close to the bridge.

"Good evening, Mr. Fish," she replied,

THE LITTLE OLD LADY WHO LIVED IN A SYRUP PITCHER

297038B

dropping a courtesy as was the custom in those days. "And thank you for the silver piece you sent me."

"A thousand times welcome, old lady," said the fish. "You did me a very great service yesterday. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

The queer little mite of an old lady thought for a moment, then she said rather timidly, "Well, I do wish I had a nice little cottage to live in. My syrup pitcher is all very well in its way, but it's very hard to keep house in it."

"Go on home," said the fish, "perhaps you may get your wish."

And when the queer little mite of an old lady had crossed the bridge and rounded the turn in the road, there by the

tree where once had stood her old broken syrup pitcher, was the neatest little cottage in the world.

For almost two weeks the little old woman was quite happy and contented in her new cottage, but one day she began thinking how nice it would be if she had a home just a trifle larger and someone to live with her—a trim little maid to take care of the house and keep her company at the same time. So she hurried down to the bridge and stood leaning over the railing. She peered down into the water until she saw the fish swimming along.

"Mr. Fish, Mr. Fish," she called loudly, and he came gliding up in answer to her summons. He seemed somewhat surprised.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said, "Did you wish something?"

"Well, I've been thinking it over, Mr. Fish," she answered, "and though of course my new cottage is perfectly beautiful, still it would be nice if I had a larger place. Then, you see, I could have friends come, and I'd want a nice little maid to keep me company and help me take care of the house."

"Oh," said the fish, "I understand. Well, go home, and I'll see what can be done about it," and he plunged under the water in a hurry.

The queer little mite of an old lady went on home, hastening along in great excitement, and at the turn of the road she saw a fine large house and a neat little maid sweeping the front steps.

"GOOD EVENING," SAID THE FISH

For almost two weeks the pair of them had the best times together, giving parties, going to church and to market, and having little picnics in the woods.

But one day when the queer little mite of an old lady returned from church with Agatha, her maid, she began to think how nice it would be if she only had a pony and cart, just big enough to hold the two of them, so that they need never walk any more in the hot sun along the dusty roads.

And so, as they reached the bridge, she said to her little maid: "Run on home, Agatha, and start the supper. I have an errand and will be home presently."

Then, when she was alone, she leaned over the parapet and began calling, "Mr. Fish, Mr. Fish." It was a long time

before he answered, and when at last he swam to the surface he seemed amazed to see her.

"Did you want to see me?" he asked.

"Well, you see," she began at once, "my new house is fine, and so is my little maid Agatha, and we have splendid times together, but there is one thing more we really need."

"What?" said the fish in shocked tones, "Another wish? Well, what is it this time?"

"It would be nice these hot days to have a little pony and cart just large enough to hold my little maid and me," said the queer little mite of a lady. "Then we'd never have to walk in the dusty road any more."

"H'm," said the fish, "we shall see, we

shall see. Go on home," and she was gone almost before he had finished speaking. As she rounded the last turn she saw standing by her own gate the dearest little fat pony, and behind him a nice little pony cart just built for two.

Then the old woman was quite happy for at least a week. She and the little maid drove to church, to market, and out into the woods, and had some splendid rides together, but never could they invite any of their friends to join them. There was room only for the two of them.

If only she had wished for a three-seated carriage with two horses! Then they could have had all the company they wished, and surely—it wouldn't make any difference to the fish. She'd go and ask him at once, that she would.

Without waiting to put on her bonnet or tell Agatha she was going out, the queer little mite of an old woman ran down the steps and down the path and onto the bridge, calling loudly at every step, "Mr. Fish!"

But it was a very long time before he answered her summons, and when at last he swam to the surface of the water, he raised his eyebrows, and said coldly, as he recognized her:

"You here again? And for another wish, I'll be bound! What is it this time, pray?"

"I want a three-seated carriage with two horses," she said boldly.

"Old lady," said the fish sternly, "you ask for too many things. I can do

nothing for you this time," and he plunged into deep water. She stood on the bridge and called him for a long time, but he did not answer, and she never saw him again.

And so at last, rather discouraged, she turned away, and trudged home, but when she had reached the turn in the road there was not a sign of her fine home or the little maid or the pony and cart, but there, in its old place, tilted back against the tree, and with its broken cover hanging all askew, was her old syrup pitcher.

And there she had to live for the rest of her life.